**Article #1 - Ancient Jewish Marriage**

Marriage in ancient times was a negotiated match involving an agreement on conditions and payment of a bridal price.

In biblical times, people were married in early youth, and marriages were usually contracted within the narrow circle of the clan and the family. It was undesirable to marry a woman from a foreign clan, lest she introduce foreign beliefs and practices.

**Negotiating a Match**

As a rule, the fathers arranged the match. The girl was consulted, but the “calling of the damsel and inquiring at her mouth” after the conclusion of all negotiations was merely a formality.

In those days a father was more concerned about the marriage of his sons than about the marriage of his daughters. No expense was involved in marrying off a daughter. The father received a dowry for his daughter whereas he had to give a dowry to the prospective father-in-law of his son when marrying him off.

The price paid by the father of the groom to the father of the bride was called *mohar*. (The term continues to be included in the text of the traditional ketubah, or Jewish wedding contract.) In Genesis (Parashat Vayishlah), Shekhem [Dinah’s suitor] said to Dinah’s father and her brothers: “Let me find favor in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. Ask me never so much mohar and *mattan*, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me, but give me the damsel to wife.”

“Mattan” was the Hebrew word for the gifts given by the groom to the bride in addition to the mohar.

The mohar was not always paid in cash. Sometimes it was paid in kind, or in service. Genesis relates the story of the servant of Abraham, who, after his request for Rebecca [to marry Isaac] was granted, *“brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebecca; he also gave to her brother and to her mother precious things.”* The servant thus gave mattan to Rebecca and mohar to her brother and mother.

The Bible does not specify what was to be done with the mohar in case the marriage agreement was broken by either of the two parties.

**Mohar as Purchase and Gift**

The mohar was originally the purchase price of the bride, and it is, therefore, understandable why it was paid by the father of the groom to the father of the bride. In ancient days, marriage was not an agreement between two individuals, but between two families.

The newly married man usually did not found a new home for himself but occupied a nook in his father’s house. The family of the groom gained, and the family of the bride lost, a valuable member who helped with all household tasks. It was reasonable, therefore, that the father of the groom should pay the father of the bride the equivalent of her value as a useful member of the family.

Yet in the course of time, the mohar lost its original meaning as a purchase price paid to the father for his daughter and assumed the significance of a gift to the near relatives of the bride. As far back as in early biblical times, it was customary for a good father to give the whole of the mohar or at least a large part of it to his daughter. A father who appropriated the whole mohar for himself was considered unkind and harsh.

The portion of the mohar which the bride received from her father, and the mattan, which the groom presented to her, were not the only possessions she brought to matrimony. A wealthy father sometimes gave his daughter a field or other landed property as well as female slaves.

**Betrothal and the Wedding**

Until late in the Middle Ages, marriage consisted of two ceremonies that were marked by celebrations at two separate times, with an interval between. First came the betrothal [*erusin*]; and later, the wedding [*nissuin*]. At the betrothal, the woman was legally married, although she still remained in her father’s house. She could not belong to another man unless she was divorced from her betrothed. The wedding meant only that the betrothed woman, accompanied by a colorful procession, was brought from her father’s house to the house of her groom, and the legal tie with him was consummated.

This division of marriage into two separate events originated in very ancient times when marriage was a purchase, both in its outward form and in its inner meaning. A woman was not recognized as a person but was bought in marriage, like chattel.

Marriage, as with any type of purchase, consisted of two acts. First, the price was paid, and an agreement reached on the conditions of sale. Sometime later the purchaser took possession of the object. In marriage, the mohar was paid and a detailed agreement reached between the families of the bride and groom. This betrothal was followed by the wedding when the bride was brought into the home of the groom, who took actual possession of her.

In those days the betrothal was the more important of these two events and maintained its significance as long as marriage was actually based on a purchase. But as women assumed more importance as individuals, and marriage ceased to be a purchase, attaining moral significance, the actual wedding became more consequential than the betrothal.

**A New Attitude Toward Women**

During biblical times, even before the Babylonian exile, Jewish life evolved and changed in many ways, including the attitude toward women. Over time, women came to be regarded as endowed with personalities just as were men.

Even as far back as early biblical times, we find traces of a new moral attitude towards women. For instance, although a man was legally allowed to marry more than one wife, barring kings and princes, very few used this right. As a rule, the ordinary Jew lived in a monogamous marriage. [However, as history progressed, monogamy has been observed predominantly by Ashkenazic Jews, following the ban on polygamy in about the 10th century by Rabbenu Gershom, Meor Ha-Golah (the Light of the Diaspora). In Sephardic communities, polygamy has never been outlawed, and several sources relate that Christians in Muslim Spain were scandalized by the not infrequent cases of Jewish polygamy.]

**An Ancient Marriage Record**

At the beginning of the 20th century, an authentic ancient Jewish marriage record from the period of the return from the Babylonian exile was discovered — the oldest marriage contract in Jewish history. The marriage did not take place in Palestine or among the exiles in Babylon, but among the Jews of Elephantine and Aswan, at the southern border of Egypt.

The marriage contract of Mibtachiah [the bride] and As-Hor [the groom] began with a declaration of marriage by As-Hor to Mibtachiah’s father. “I came to thy house for thee to give me thy daughter, Mibtachiah, to wife; she is my wife, and I am her husband from this day and forever.”

Following this declaration of betrothal, all terms of the marriage contract were written in detail. As-Hor paid Machseiah, the father, five shekels the Persian standard, as a mohar for his daughter. Besides, Mibtachiah received a gift of 65 1/2 shekels from As-Hor. From this, we gather that the mohar that fathers received for their daughters was then merely a nominal payment, the formality of an older custom.

According to the marriage contract, Mibtachiah had equal rights with her husband. She had her own property which she could bequeath as she pleased, and she had the right to pronounce a sentence of divorce against As-Hor, even as he had the right to pronounce it against her. All she had to do was to appear before the court of the community and declare that she had developed an aversion to As-Hor. We do not know to what degree the equality of rights enjoyed by Jewish women of Elephantine was due to Jewish or to Persian-Babylonian law.

**The *Ketubah*, or Marriage Contract**

In many points of content and form, Mibtachiah’s marriage contract resembles the version of the ketubah (wedding contract) still in vogue in modern Jewish life.

In references to marriage throughout the Bible, the mohar was paid and gifts presented, but a written contract was never mentioned. However, Deuteronomy states explicitly that if a man dislikes his wife, “he writes her a bill of divorcement and gives it in her hand” (24: 3). Modern critics of the Bible have agreed that on the whole, the Deuteronomic law is a product of the century preceding the Babylonian exile. If a written document was employed at that period in dissolving a marriage, we have to assume that it was also employed in contracting a marriage.

**A Divorce Penalty**

The mohar institution was entirely transformed during late-biblical and post-biblical times. From a bridal price, it finally became a lien to be paid by the husband in case of divorce, or by his heirs in case of his death.

The change in the mohar institution was a direct result of changes in the material conditions of life. In the simple conditions of early biblical days, all sons and daughters married young. No one stayed single.

The situation changes, however, in conditions reflected in the wisdom book of Ben-Sira, written not long before the uprising of the Maccabees. Apparently, bachelorship, common among Jews in Talmudic times, had its beginnings in pre-Maccabean days. Economic conditions were such that men hesitated to shoulder the responsibility of matrimony. It was not unusual for women to support the men they married.

Under these conditions, there was no place for the old mohar institution. Fathers no longer expected any material gain from their daughters’ marriages. On the contrary, fathers often gave rich dowries to daughters as an inducement to marriageable men.

Yet the mohar institution did not pass out of existence. It was reformed intermittently in the course of this period, adapting itself to new circumstances. The first stage in this process made the bride’s father a mere trustee of the mohar. The money was then inherited ultimately either by the husband or by his children. This reform availed little, so the husband himself was made the trustee of the money, which was employed to buy household articles.

The last step in the reform of the mohar institution was made by Simeon ben Shatach, head of the Pharisees, who were the ruling party in the state during the reign of the Maccabean queen, Salome Alexandra (76-67 B.C.E.). He declared that the mohar, which was ordinarily 200 silver dinars for a girl, and 100 for a widow, should merely be written in the marriage deed, as a lien of the wife on the estate of her husband, to be paid to her only if he divorced her, or at his death!

This reform served two humanitarian purposes. It made marriage easier, and divorce more difficult. A man did not need 200 dinars in cash to marry a girl, but he needed this amount if he wanted to divorce her. The ketubah thus protected the woman from being arbitrarily divorced by her husband.

*Adapted with permission from* The Lifetime of a Jew Throughout the Ages of Jewish History *(UAHC Press).*

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ancient-jewish-marriage/

**Article #2 - The Jewish Wedding Analogy**

Although various sources describing the practice of Jewish marriage at the time of Christ differ in the details, there is general agreement concerning its basic elements. Unlike Western marriage practices, the Jewish marriage has a greater degree of formalism involving numerous steps:

Jewish marriage included numerous steps: first, betrothal (which involved the prospective groom’s traveling from his father’s house to the home of the prospective bride, paying the purchase price, and thus establishing the marriage covenant). Second, the groom’s returning to his father’s house (which meant remaining separate from his bride for 12 months, during which time he prepared the living accommodations for his wife in his father’s house). Third, the groom’s coming for his bride at a time not exactly known to her. Fourth, his return with her to the groom’s father’s house to consummate the marriage and to celebrate the wedding feast for the next seven days (during which the bride remained closeted in her bridal chamber).1

First, the father of the groom made the arrangements for the marriage and paid the bride price. The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes it occurred when both children were small, and at other times it was a year before the marriage itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day.

The second step, which occurred a year or more after the first step, was the fetching of the bride. The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride to bring her to his home. In connection with this step, two other things should be noted. *First*, it was the father of the groom who determined the timing. *Second*, prior to the groom’s leaving to fetch the bride, he must already have a place prepared for her as their abode.

This was followed by the third step, the wedding ceremony, to which a few would be invited. Before the wedding ceremony, the bride underwent a ritual immersion for ritual cleansing. The fourth step, the marriage feast, would follow and could last for as many as seven days. Many more people would be invited to the feast than were to the marriage ceremony. In the Marriage of the Lamb, all four of these steps of the Jewish wedding ceremony are evident.2

The major steps of the Jewish wedding analogy are summarized below with related Scriptures:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Steps in a Jewish Wedding | | |
| Step | Description | Scriptures |
| Marriage Covenant | The father pays for the bride and establishes the marriage covenant. | Acts 20:28; 1Cor. 6:19-20; 1Cor. 11:25 Eph. 5:25-27 |
| Bridal Chamber Prepared | The son returns to his father’s house and prepares the bridal chamber. | John 6:62; 14:6; Acts 1:9-11 |
| Bride Fetched | At a time determined by the father (Matthew. 24:36), the groom fetches the bride to bring her to his father’s house. “Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the time of his coming. As a result, the groom’s arrival was preceded by a shout, which forewarned the bride to be prepared for his coming.”3 | John 14:3; 1Th. 4:13-18 |
| Bride Cleansed | The bride undergoes ritual cleansing prior to the wedding ceremony. | 1Cor. 3:12-15; Rev. 19:7-8+ |
| Wedding Ceremony | The private wedding ceremony. | Rev. 19:7+ |
| Consummation | In the privacy of the bridal chamber, the bride and groom consummate the marriage. | Rev. 19:7+ |
| Marriage Feast | The celebratory marriage feast to which many are invited. | Matt. 22:1-14; Matt. 25:1-13; Luke 12:36 |

At the time of our writing, the first step in the wedding has already taken place. The marriage covenant was established at the First Coming of Christ. Whenever a person places their faith in Jesus Christ, they enter into this covenant (the New Covenant) and become part of His bride. Since the ascension of Jesus following His resurrection, He has been at His Father’s house preparing the bridal chamber:

*“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions (μοναι [monai], dwelling places); if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* (John 14:1-3)

As we discussed concerning the *Rapture*, passages such as John 14:1-3 are of a completely different character from what is described in Revelation 19:1+ concerning the Second Coming. In John 14:1, Jesus indicates a heavenly destination for believers. He returns from His Father’s house to fetch them and to bring them to heaven. There is an emphasis on intimacy: “that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). How different this is from the scene before us in this chapter (below)! Jesus will ride forth in warfare and vengeance with the armies of heaven. There will be immense bloodshed at His coming, and His return is followed by the reign of the saints *on earth* (Revelation 20:4-6+). It is irreconcilable differences such as these in various “coming passages” which tell us that His coming for the Church at the *Rapture* is a *different* coming than His Second Coming.4

In its description of the Second Coming, Revelation 19:1+ does not mention either a translation (rapture) of living believers (1Cor. 15:51-52) or a resurrection of dead believers (cf. 1Th. 4:16).5

At the time the events of John’s vision actually take place—during the Tribulation prior to the Second Coming—the first *three* of the steps in the wedding ceremony will be complete: the bride has been fetched to the Father’s house in the *Rapture* of the Church. For an extended treatment of the analogy between Christ and the Church and Jewish marriage practices, see [Showers, *Maranatha, Our Lord Come*, 164-169].

Notes

1 Charles C. Ryrie, *Come Quickly, Lord Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 67.

2 Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of Messiah*, rev ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 162-163.

3 Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha, Our Lord Come* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995), 165.

4 We see similar irreconcilable differences in OT passages concerning His ministry: He is to reign as king (Isa. Isa. 9:6-7), but He is to die for the world (Isa. Isa. 53:1). How can these both be true? The answer is found in *two* separate comings. And so it is with *Rapture* and Second Coming passages.

5 John MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2000), Rev. 19:11.

6 Showers, *Maranatha, Our Lord Come*, 164-169.

http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/related-topics/the-Jewish-wedding-analogy.html

**Article #3 - Roles in the Wedding Party**

When we interpret passages which touch on the subject of marriage, we must be careful to distinguish the different roles within the wedding party. There are a groom and a bride, but they are not alone in the marriage party. There are additional men and women who attend the wedding party. If we fail to appreciate these different roles, we confuse those *attending* the bride with the bride herself (e.g., Matt. Matt. 25:1-13). Since the role of the bride and groom are fairly obvious, here we will mention some of the related members of the bridal party.

The Old Testament describes several different roles in courtship and marriage. In the Song of Solomon, we find repeated mention of *virgins* who are not the bride (The Shulamite): “Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name *is* ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you” (Sos. 1:3). Although the virgins are not the bride, they love The Beloved (cf. Matt. 15:1-13). The song also mentions *daughters of Jerusalem* who are friends of the Shulamite who also seek The Beloved (Sos. 2:7; Sos. 5:8; Sos. 6:1). The Beloved has companions who desire to look upon The Shulamite (Sos. 5:1; Sos. 6:13; Sos. 8:13). Even though the relationship is between The Shulamite and The Beloved, others on the sideline also express interest in the relationship between The Shulamite and The Beloved.

The psalmist records a royal wedding which involves both the Queen (bride) and King (groom), but also includes her companions, called virgins: *“Kings’ daughters are among Your honorable women; at Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. . . She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; the virgins, her companions who follow her shall be brought to You”* (Psalm 45:9-14). Not everyone at a wedding occupies the role of the groom or bride. The New Testament also mentions relationships within the wedding party other than the bride and groom. When John the Baptist’s disciples come to him complaining about Jesus’ rise in popularity, John observes: “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled” (John 3:29).

From John’s response, we learn several important facts: (1) Christ is a bridegroom; (2) Christ has a bride (those who were coming to Him); (3) John is not of the bride, but is the *friend of the bridegroom*.1 Elsewhere, Jesus referred to his disciples as “friends of the bridegroom” (literally: *sons of the bride chamber*, Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34). The differences among roles within the bridal party are most evident in the parable of the foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). When reading the parable, we need to ask two related questions: (1) is this parable about polygamy? (2) If not, where is the bride? Mention is made of ten virgins and one bridegroom. The virgins are not to be married—they *attend* the wedding party.

Notably absent in the parable is any mention of the bride. And where do the wise virgins go? “And while they [the foolish virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut” (Matt. 25:10). *Wedding* is γάμους [gamous] , plural, which generally denotes the *wedding feast*: “Josephus distinguishes in *Antiquities* 14, 467f between γάμος [gamos] = wedding [singular] and γάμοι [gamoi] = wedding celebration [plural]. But for ‘marriage’ he sometimes uses the singular, sometimes the plural.”2 These virgins are not waiting for the bridegroom in order *to get married* but *to attend the wedding feast*.3 The groom already has a bride who is not mentioned in the parable. We believe these distinctions are significant and indicate that the coming of the groom for the virgins is at His Second Coming which follows upon the marriage of the Lamb described here. The virgins do not marry but attend the marriage feast which follows. The context also supports this view:

This parable as well as the next one deals with the Jews in the tribulation period. This is seen from various facts. The context favors this view . . . The subject being discussed is the end time, the final years before the kingdom is established. At this time the church will be absent from the earth.4

In summary, there are different roles within the wedding analogy found within Scripture. Not everyone who will be in the kingdom of God is the bride. This is evident from the distinctions found in Scripture. It is also evident because the marriage of the Lamb takes place in Heaven prior to Christ’s Second Coming—when some saints are still on the earth below, and many of the saints in heaven have not yet been resurrected to receive their glorified bodies.

Just as the Bridegroom comes not alone, but with attendants, companions, and a long train of rejoicing ones who make up his party, the whole of whom together are called the Bridegroom’s coming, whilst, strictly speaking, there is a wide difference between him and those with him; so it is on the side of the Bride. She has her companions and attendants too,—“virgins which follow her.” They make up her company and train. In coming to wed her, the Bridegroom also comes into near and close relation to them. To a blessed degree, they share the Bride’s honors. . . [but] the Bride has relations to the Bridegroom which belong to her alone.5

Having established that not all believers are the Lamb’s bride, who is the bride?

Notes

1 “John was martyred before the Church was formed. Hence he comes in as one, perhaps the most honored, of the guests at the marriage supper.”—Walter Scott, *Exposition of The Revelation* (London, England: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), Rev. 19:9.

2 Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 151.

3 The KJV and NKJV have “wedding” in Matt. Mat. 22:1-14 and Mat. 25:1-13, whereas the NASB has “wedding feast.” The Greek word is γαμους [gamous] (plural) which generally indicates the wedding banquet. The plural form implies the banquet or celebration (as opposed to a smaller, potentially private ceremony).

4 Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold The King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 283.

5 J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 427.

http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/related-topics/roles-in-the-wedding-party.html

**Article #4 - Israel Married to Jehovah**

The nation Israel is unlikely to be the Lamb’s bride because she has already been wed. God, the Father is Israel’s husband: 1

“Return, O backsliding children,” says the Lord; “for **I am married to you**. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.” (Jer. 3:14) [emphasis added]

“They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, may he return to her again?’ Would not that land be greatly polluted? But **you have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to Me**,” says the Lord. (Jer. 3:1) [emphasis added]

Then I saw that for all the causes for which **backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce**; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. (Jer. 3:8) [emphasis added]

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though **I was a husband to them**, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Jer. 31:31-33) [emphasis added]

Even though Israel proved to be an unfaithful wife which God put away by divorce, He promises to remain faithful to her in His relationship as a husband. Moreover, in order to divorce her, she had to first be married.

Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; **For she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!** Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts . . . (Hos. 2:2) [emphasis added]

She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, ‘**I will go and return to my first husband**, for then it was better for me than now.’ (Hos. 2:7) [emphasis added]

As unfaithful as Israel has been, God promises to stand by her. Their husband-wife relationship will be reestablished:

“And it shall be, in that day,” says the Lord, “That **you will call Me ‘My Husband,’** And no longer call Me ‘My Master.’ ” (Hos. 2:16) [emphasis added]

**I will betroth you to Me forever**; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord. (Hos. 2:19-20) [emphasis added]

The LORD’s accomplished purpose in Israel’s chastening also will result in the reestablishment of her original husband-wife relationship to the LORD.2

The relationship between Israel and Jehovah is dramatically different than what the NT records concerning Christ and His bride. Perhaps the most significant difference is that the marriage of Jehovah to Israel occurred in time past, whereas the marriage of Christ with His bride has not yet taken place. This is the subject of the passage before us.

Israel in her land was the wife of Jehovah (Jer. 3:14-20; Isa. 54:1), but the wife was divorced because of her iniquity. Israel, however, is to be reinstated in Jehovah’s favor. But a divorced wife can never again be a virgin, and it is not a divorced wife but a virgin whom the Lord marries (Lev. 21:14).3

Notes

1 “Israel in captivity is prefigured as a wife (Isa. 54:5; Isa. 62:5 [Jerusalem]) put away for unfaithfulness, who is childless and desolate.”—Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), Rev. 54:1.

2 Ibid., Hos. 2:15.

3 Walter Scott, *Exposition of The Revelation* (London, England: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), Rev. 19:6.

**Article #5 - Church Betrothed to Christ**

Having seen that the relationship between Israel and God is outlined in terms of a consummated marriage followed by divorce and eventual restoration, we are in a position to examine passages which describe a marriage relationship involving Christ.

If one makes the Wife of Jehovah and the Bride of Messiah one and the same, he is faced with numerous contradictions because of the different descriptions given. Only when one sees two separate entities, Israel as the Wife of Jehovah and the Church as the Bride of the Messiah, do all such contradictions vanish.1

As we saw above, John the Baptist declared himself as the *friend of the bridegroom* (John 3:29). Thus, he indicated that Jesus is a bridegroom and that he, John, was not part of the bride. In numerous other passages, Jesus referred to Himself as a bridegroom (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34). Paul describes the relationship of the Corinthian church as being betrothed as a virgin to Christ: “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). When teaching of the freedom of the believer from the law, Paul uses the analogy of a woman whose first husband dies who then becomes free to marry another: “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God” (Rom. 7:4). In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul makes the analogy between a husband and wife and Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:24). In the same way that husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies, so Christ loves believers: “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:30-32). Paul is saying that in the same way believers are merged with Christ, as the body of Christ, so should husbands consider their wives. “[The Church] is both the body of Christ and the bride of Christ, as Eve was the body of Adam and also his bride.”2 Some observe that none of these passages explicitly teach that the Church *is* the bride of Christ. They suggest that the marriage analogy used by these passages is only an instructional aid which is intended to teach relational truths and that the passages are not meant to establish the Church as the bride. While it may be true that the primary intent in these passages is teaching relational truths, this does not necessarily mean that the Holy Spirit chose the marriage analogy by chance. The sheer number of times where the wedding analogy appears is in itself a considerable indication that more is afoot than mere analogy:

In the OT, God is the bridegroom of Israel (cf. Isa. 54:6; Isa. 62:5; Jer. 31:32; Eze. 16:7-14; Hos. 2:16, Hos. 2:19), and in the NT, Christ is the bridegroom of the church (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25 ff.; Rev. 3:20+; Rev. 19:9+; Rev. 21:2+, Rev. 21:9+; Rev. 22:17+). In the gospels, Christ is the bridegroom a number of times (cf.Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29) and parables about marriage occur in Matthew. Matt. 22:2-14; Matt. 25:1-13; Luke 14:15-24.3

We believe that the bride/bridegroom analogy in the NT is more than a mere framework for the delivery of relational instruction, but also an indication of the identity of the bride. The bride of Christ consists of the Church—those who have been baptized into His body, the body of Christ. As such, they are “one flesh” with Him, which is the subject of the mystery which Paul related to the Ephesians (Eph. 5:32). There is a unique sense in which the Church is *His*: “on this rock I will build **My church**” [emphasis added] (Matt. 16:18).

That Abraham or any other Old Testament saint will form part of *the Body of Christ*, we cannot for a moment believe! The great mystery of the Church, His Body, committed to Paul in such a sense that he called himself *minister* thereof (Col. 1:24-27), a ministry so very distinct, definite and exclusive as to call for the great passage of Ephesians (Eph. 5:23), cannot be merely an opening up to the Old Testament saints of a calling, character and privileged which they possess and of which they did not know! That is unthinkable. No one was “baptized” into that one Body until Pentecost. When that Body, the Church, is presented by Christ to Himself, “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” it will be composed only of the saints from Pentecost to the rapture.4

Of whom is the bride composed? We answer unhesitatingly, of *all* saints embraced within these two epochs, Pentecost (Acts 2:1) and the Translation (1Thess. 4:17). These two events respectively mark the commencement and the termination of the Church’s sojourn on earth.5

Some may question why the church age believers should be granted the honor of being the bride, while believers from other ages are merely guests. But one may equally ask why God singled out Israel to be the covenant people. The only answer to both questions is that God sovereignly purposed that it be so (cf. Deut. 7:7-8).6

A typological hint as to the bride of the Lamb can also be found in a study of the book of Ruth. The story involves Naomi (a Jew), Ruth (a Gentile), and Boaz (the kinsman-redeemer, see commentary on *Revelation 5:1*). Through the sequence of events recorded in the book, Boaz (who represents the Messiah) takes Ruth as his Gentile bride (representing the Church), and Naomi (representing Israel) is restored to her land. Another consideration when identifying the bride of the Lamb is the matter of resurrection. At the time of the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7+), there is only one group of saints who have already been resurrected to receive their glorified bodies: the Church at the *Rapture* prior to the Tribulation. It would seem premature for other saints which have not yet been resurrected to be included in the marriage with the Lamb. Nor will they return with Him as part of the army of heaven (Rev. 19:14+).

The difficulty of including Israel along with the church as part of the bride is a chronological one. OT saints and dead saints from the period of Daniel’s seventieth week will rise in time for the Millennium (Dan. 12:1-2), but not in time to join Christ in His triumphal return (Revelation 19:14+). It is also impossible for saints who die during the Millennium to be part of this company because their resurrection will not come in time (Rev. 20:5-6+). Yet it is incontrovertible that Israel will appear with the church in the New Jerusalem which is also Christ’s bride. The city’s twelve pillars and twelve foundations (Rev. 21:12+, Rev. 21:14+) prove the presence of both distinctive groups.7

Although they will be resurrected to participate in the wedding *feast* at the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:4+), at the time of the marriage itself they are only soul and spirit. Because they were never joined to the body of Christ by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit which began on the Day of Pentecost, they are not part of the marriage mystery “concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:30-32). See commentary on *Revelation 17:14*.

Various identifications of the wife of the Lamb described in Revelation 19:7-8+ have included the redeemed of national Israel, the church, and Israel and the church. The portrayal of Israel as a faithless wife of the Lord in the OT is an obstacle to the first and third possibilities, as is the chronology of Israel’s resurrection. The redeemed of Israel will not rise until after the Seventieth Week of Daniel (Dan. 12:1-2) so they will not be part of the bride at the time depicted in Revelation (Rev. 19:7-8+), a time before the Second Advent (Rev. 19:11-16+).8

According to Daniel 12:1-3 and Isaiah 26:19-21) . . . the resurrection of Israel and the Old Testament saints will not take place until the second advent of Christ. Revelation makes it equally clear that tribulation saints will not be resurrected until that time also (Rev. 20:4-6+). While it would be impossible to eliminate these groups from the place of observers, they can not be in the position of participants in the event itself.9

Notes

1 Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of Messiah*, rev ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 598.

2 Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Revelation* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961), 116.

3 Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), Rev. 19:7.

4 William R. Newell, *Revelation: Chapter by Chapter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994,c1935), 297.

5 Walter Scott, *Exposition of The Revelation* (London, England: Pickering & Inglis, n.d.), Rev. 19:6.

6 John MacArthur, *Revelation 12-22: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2000), Rev. 19:7.

7 Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, Rev. 19:7.

8 R. L. Thomas, “Marriage Supper of the Lamb,” in Mal Couch, ed., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 248.

9 J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 226.

**Article #6 - Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Marriage and Jewish Wedding Customs:**

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| **The Three Stage ritual of Bible Marriages**  By Steve Rudd |  |

**Introduction:**

1. Only when you understand the wedding customs of the Bible can you begin to appreciate the rich imagery of our salvation in Christ and our marriage to Christ *as his virgin bride*.
2. The three "C" of bible weddings: Contract, Consummation, Celebration
   1. These same things exist today in modern marriages, the order and timing of each stage are different.
3. Ancient Jewish weddings never involved a wedding ceremony like we see today with the bride walking down the aisle to be married in the synagogue.
   1. The "wedding ceremony" is something that did not develop for hundreds of years after Jesus rose from the dead.
   2. Modern Jewish weddings are as removed and different from the ancient Jewish marriage culture of the first century as Christian weddings are.
   3. If you want to understand the many metaphors, illustrations, and figures of speech used by Jesus about "the wedding feast" and the church as the "bride of Christ," you must learn the ancient culture and forget everything you know about modern marriage ceremonies.
4. There were three states of marriage in the Bible:
   1. Stage 1: signing the "ketubbah" contract (Creating the marriage bond)

                                                              i.      The bride would choose her husband, and her father would sign a legal contract with him called a "ketubbah."

                                                            ii.      Once this is signed the couple is 100% married but do not have sex yet.

                                                            iii.      Young children were often married, (arraigned marriage) but did not consummate until of age.

* 1. Stage 2: The "chuppah": sexual consummation.

                                                              i.      Up to 7 years later, the groom is able to raise the money as set out in the ketubbah contract and notifies the father of the bride, who then sets a date to consummate the marriage at the bride's home.

                                                            ii.      The bride waits with her maidens, for the arrival of the groom and his companions.

                                                          iii.      The couple enters the chuppah room and consummates the marriage while the companions of the bride and groom wait and celebrate outside or in the next room.

                                                           iv.      The groom hands the bloodied "proof of virginity cloth" to the witnesses chosen by the bride's parents, who then give it to the bride for safekeeping.

* 1. Stage 3: The wedding feast

                                                              i.      After consummation, the entire wedding party walks to the house of the groom in a procession for a wedding feast.

                                                            ii.      At the conclusion of the wedding feast, the couple has completed the ancient ritual of marriage.

* 1. There was no "wedding ceremony" in the synagogue in the first century, performed under a canopy where the bride and groom would hold hands and say, "I do" before an audience of friends and family. This didn’t develop for hundreds of years after Jesus died on the cross as the Passover lamb for the sins of mankind.

1. This ancient ritual is seen from the time of Abraham, right down to the first century:
   1. Rebekah contract: “But when food was set before him to eat, he said, “I will not eat until I have told my business.” And he said, “Speak on.”” (Genesis 24:33)
   2. Rebekah contract: ““Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has spoken.” When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord. The servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.” (Genesis 24:51–53)
   3. Rebekah consented: “And they said, “We will call the girl and consult her wishes.” Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.”” (Genesis 24:57–58)
   4. Rebekah consummation: “Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. She said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master.” Then she took her veil and covered herself. The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.” (Genesis 24:64–67)
   5. “Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my relative, should you, therefore, serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Leah’s eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me.” So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my time, is completed, that I may go in to her.” Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him, and Jacob went in to her. Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?” But Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. “Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.” Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.” (Genesis 29:15–30)

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| The three stages of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah: Genesis 24 | | |
| Contract (stage 1) | Gen 24:33  Gen 24:51-53  Gen 24:57-58 | An offer of marriage is proposed. The offer is accepted, and Rebekah is married by contract. Gifts and money are given both to the bride and the parents of the bride. Notice that Rebekah was asked if she consented to the marriage. |
| Consummation (stage 2) | Gen 24:64-67 | Rebekah and Isaac go to the tent |
| Celebration (stage 3) | - | No mention of the wedding feast, but one likely happened. |
| The three stages of Jacob's marriage to Leah: Gen 29 | | |
| Contract (stage 1) | Gen 29:15-20 | Jacob contracts to work for 7 in advance before he gets the girl. |
| Consummation (stage 2) | Gen 29:21-26 | Jacob pays the dowry price of 7 years and takes Leah into the tent. |
| Celebration (stage 3) | Gen 29:27-28 | He completed the 7-day wedding feast with Leah |
| The three stages of Jacob's marriage to Rachel: Gen 29 | | |
| Contract (stage 1) | Gen 29:27 | Jacob contracts to work for 7 MORE years but gets to consummate the wedding at the before he pays the full dowry. |
| Consummation (stage 2) | Gen 29:30 | He took Leah into the tent at the beginning of the 7-day feast, then at the end of the 7-day feast, he took Rachel into the tent. |
| Celebration (stage 3) | Gen 29:27-28 | The 7-day wedding feast was for both girls. |

**I. Stage one: the signing of the legal document called, the “ketubbah."**

1. The ketubbah (plural is ketubboth) was a legally binding document whose primary purpose was to protect the bride, even though she did not even sign it. The father of the bride would use his wisdom to look out for the best interests of his daughter.
   1. The bride was seen as being completely under her father's control.
   2. For example, if a man sleeps with a virgin, they generally got married, but her father had to consent.
   3. “So then both he [father of the bride] who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.” (1 Corinthians 7:38)
2. The groom and the father of the bride would negotiate a legal document with conditions that clearly laid out:
   1. The "Dowry": money to be paid to the father by the groom: “Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage.” (Genesis 34:12)
   2. The "Bride Price": The bride price was usually set at 50 shekels of silver and was a cash penalty for divorce without cause or taking a second wife without consent and permission of the bride and/or her father. (Polygamy was rare at the time of Christ.)
   3. The bride's Estate Inventory: An accounting of assets (cash, property, livestock, businesses, etc.) the bride contributed to the new husband's estate when she married him.
3. The First stage of a Jewish marriage, (the signing of the “ketubbah”) is the last stage of modern weddings (the signing of the marriage license that you buy at city hall).
   1. Since Jewish marriages were sealed when the father of the bride and the groom signed the “ketubbah,” with or without the consent or knowledge of the bride, the "dating" (get to know you stage) began after they were "married."
   2. Just like today's legal documents, the ketubah was signed in triplicate where the father, the groom each got a copy, and a third one was "filed" with the court (synagogue) with a seal to be broken only by a judge.
   3. Many copies of ancient Ketubboth have been unearthed through archeology.
4. Confusion over Jewish Betrothal: When the groom and the father of the bride signed the ketubbah, the couple was 100% legally married.
   1. The couple was legally married, but sexual co-habitation has not yet begun until stage two up to a year later.
   2. This is seen in the fact that although Mary and Joseph were betrothed, they had never had sex, even though they were 100% legally married.
   3. Although called betrothal, it was not equivalent to our modern engagement today, which is nothing more than "monogamous promise dating" with no legal consequences if broken.
5. Once signed, a legal divorce was required to dissolve the "betrothal."
6. Child brides were cultural norms in both Israeli and Arabic cultures:
   1. Josephus tells of several instances where children were married, sometimes for political advantage:
      1. "This Sylleus, upon some occasion coming to Herod, and supping with him, saw Salome, and set his heart upon her; and understanding that she was a widow, he discoursed with her. (222) Now because Salome was at this time less in favor with her brother, she looked upon Sylleus with some passion, and was very earnest to be married to him; and on the days following there appeared many, and those very great, indications of their agreement together. (223) Now the women carried this news to the king, and laughed at the indecency of it; whereupon Herod inquired about it further of Pheroras, and desired him to observe them at supper, how their behavior was one towards another; who told him, that by signals which came from their heads and their eyes, they both were evidently in love. (224) After this, Sylleus the Arabian being suspected, went away but came again in two or three months afterwards, as it were on that very design, and spake to Herod about it, and desired that Salome might be given him to wife; for that his affinity might not be disadvantageous to his affairs, by a union with Arabia, the government of which country was already in effect under his power, and more evidently would be his hereafter. (225) Accordingly, when Herod discoursed with his sister about it, and asked her whether she were disposed to this match, she immediately agreed to it; but when Sylleus was desired to come over to the Jewish religion, and then he should marry her, and that it was impossible to do it on any other terms, he could not bear that proposal, and went his way; for he said, that if he should do so, he should be stoned by the Arabs. (226) Then did Pheroras reproach Salome for her incontinence, as did the women much more; and said that Sylleus had debauched her. (227) As for that damsel which the king had betrothed to his brother Pheroras, but he had not taken her, as I have before related, because he was enamored of his former wife, Salome desired of Herod she might be given to her son by Costobarus; (228) which match he was very willing to, but was dissuaded from it by Pheroras, who pleaded, that this young man would not be kind to her since her father had been slain by him and that it was more just that his son, who was to be his successor in the tetrarchy, should have her; so he begged his pardon, and persuaded him to do so. Accordingly the damsel, upon this change of her espousals, was disposed of to this young man, the son of Pheroras, the king giving for her portion a hundred talents." (Josephus, Antiquities 16.221–228)
      2. **2.** (12) Now Herod brought up his sons’ children with great care; for Alexander had two sons by Glaphyra; and Aristobulus had three sons by Bernice, Salome’s daughter, and two daughters; (13) and as his friends were once with him, he presented the children before them; and deploring the hard fortune of his own sons, he prayed that no such ill fortune should befall those who were their children, but that they might improve in virtue, and obtain what they justly deserved and might make him amends for his care of their education. (14) He also caused them to be betrothed against they should come to the proper age of marriage; the elder of Alexander’s sons to Pheroras’s daughter, and Antipater’s daughter to Aristobulus’s eldest son. He also allotted one of Aristobulus’s daughters to Antipater’s son, and Aristobulus’s other daughter to Herod, a son of his own, who was born to him by the high priest’s daughter; for it is the ancient practice among us to have many wives at the same time. (15) Now, the king made those espousals for the children, out of commiseration of them now they were fatherless, as endeavoring to render Antipater kind to them by these intermarriages. (16) But Antipater did not fail to bear the same temper of mind to his brother’s children which he had borne to his brothers themselves; and his father’s concern about them provoked his indignation against them upon his supposal, that they would become greater than ever his brothers had been: while Archelaus, a king, would support his daughter’s sons, and Pheroras, a tetrarch, would accept of one of the daughters as a wife to his son. (17) What provoked him also was this, that all the multitude would so commiserate these fatherless children, and so hate him [for making them fatherless], that all would come out since they were no strangers to his vile disposition towards his brethren. He contrived, therefore, to overturn his father’s settlements, as thinking it a terrible thing that they should be so related to him and be so powerful withal. (18) So Herod yielded to him, and changed his resolution at his entreaty; and the determination now was, that Antipater himself should marry Aristobulus’s daughter, and Antipater’s son should marry Pheroras’s daughter. So the espousals for the marriages were changed after this manner, even without the king’s real approbation. (Josephus, Antiquities 17.12-18)
      3. **2.** (556) Accordingly, Herod got together his kindred and friends, and set before them the children, and with his eyes full of tears, said thus to them: “It was an unlucky fate that took away from me these children’s fathers, which children are recommended to me by that natural commiseration which their orphan condition requires; however, I will endeavor, though I have been a most unfortunate father, to appear a better grandfather, and to leave these children such curators after myself as are dearest to me. (557) I therefore betroth thy daughter, Pheroras to the eldest of these brethren, the children of Alexander, that thou mayest be obliged to take care of them. I also betroth to thy son, Antipater, the daughter of Aristobulus; be thou therefore a father to that orphan; and my son Herod [Philip] shall have her sister, whose grandfather, by the mother’s side, was high priest. (558) And let every one that loves me be of my sentiments in these dispositions, whom none that hath an affection for me will abrogate. And I pray God that he will join these children together in marriage, to the advantage of my kingdom, and of my posterity; and may he look down with eyes more serene upon them than he looked upon their fathers!”
      4. **3.** (559) While he spake these words, he wept, and joined the children’s right hands together: after which he embraced them every one after an affectionate manner, and dismissed the assembly. Upon this Antipater was in great disorder immediately, and lamented publicly at what was done; for he supposed that this dignity, which was conferred on these orphans, was for his own destruction, even in his father’s lifetime, and that he should run another risk of losing the government if Alexander’s sons should have both Archelaus [a king], and Pheroras a tetrarch, to support him. (560) He also considered how he was himself hated by the nation, and how they pitied these orphans; how great affection the Jews bare to those brethren of his when they were alive, and how gladly they remembered them, now they had perished by his means. So he resolved by all the ways possible to get these espousals dissolved. (Josephus, Wars 1.555–560)
   2. Muhammad, the inventor of Islam, married Ayesha or Aisha at age 6 but waited 3 years to consummate the marriage when she was nine years old. (recorded in several Hadiths)
   3. Today in Saudi Arabia, the home country of Islam, child brides as young as one year old are permitted as long as the girl is not consummated until she is older.  Notice the language of "marriage contract" is exactly what we see in the Bible.
   4. The news report that speaks of stage 1 Contract with a delay for stage 2 Consummation: "Saudi Marriage Official Says 1-Year-Old Brides OK: Call it marriage, Islamic style. Saudi marriage officiant Dr. Ahmad al-Mu'bi told Lebanese television viewers last week that it's permissible for girls as young as 1 to marry — as long as sex is postponed. Al-Mu'bi's remarkable comments also included an explanation that "there is no minimal age for entering marriage." "You can have a marriage contract even with a 1-year-old girl, not to mention a girl of 9, 7 or 8," he said. "But is the girl ready for sex or not?" What is the appropriate age for sex for the first time? This varies according to environment and tradition," al-Mu'bi said in an interview with LBC-TV." (Fox News, Wednesday, June 25, 2008)

[](http://www.bible.ca/islam/islam-myths-muhammad-sinless-4-wives.htm)

**II. Stage two: “chuppah” (sexual consummation): Matt 25:1-13**

1. When the father consented to the groom, he was allowed to come to the home of the bride and consummate the marriage in her own house. Afterwards, he would lead her in a ceremonial procession to a wedding feast at his house. (Stage 3) The parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1f) illustrates both stage 2 and stage 3 of the marriage.
2. Once the ketubah was signed, the couple did not have sex until the groom fulfilled his financial obligations to the father of the bride.
   1. A delay might last years, as in the case of Jacob, who had to work 7 years for Laban, before he could sleep with his wife, Rachel. The night Laban tricked Jacob at the end of 7 years by giving him Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob had already made a legal contract with Laban for Rachel and was married to her for 7 years, but not permitted to have sex with her. When he was tricked, he made a second legal contract that at the end of the wedding week, he would be allowed to have sex with Rachel, but would have to work another 7 years afterward.
   2. “Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her.” Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?” But Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. “Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.” Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.” (Genesis 29:21–30)
   3. Sometimes the delay between the signing of the ketubah and consummation was because arranged marriages were signed when the bride was a child and the groom had to wait until she reached puberty.
   4. Josephus records that Herod the Great married Mariamne, the daughter of Alexander, but then waited 4 years before consummating. Here is a time of 4 years between stages one and two in Israel at the time of Christ.

                                                              i.      **"**(240) When Herod had fought against these in the avenues of Judea, he was conqueror in the battle, and drove away Antigonus, and returned to Jerusalem, beloved by everybody for the glorious action he had done; for those who did not before favor him, did join themselves to him now, because of his marriage into the family of Hyrcanus; (241) for as he had formerly married a wife out of his own country of no ignoble blood, who was called Doris, of whom he begat Antipater, so did he now marry Mariamne, the daughter of Alexander the son of Aristobulus, and the granddaughter of Hyrcanus, and was become thereby a relation of the king. Wars of the Jews 1.240-241

                                                            ii.      "(325) But Messala contradicted them, on behalf of the young men, and all this in the presence of Hyrcanus, who was Herod’s father-in-law already. (Antiquities 14.325) [footnote: We may here take notice that espousals alone were of old esteemed a sufficient foundation for affinity, Hyrcanus being here called *father-in-law* to Herod, because his granddaughter Mariamne was betrothed to him, although the marriage was not completed till four years afterward. See Matt. 1:16 footnote at Antiquities 14.325, The works of Josephus: Complete and unabridged, Josephus, F., & Whiston, W., 1987 AD]

                                                          iii.      "(465) When the rigor of winter was over, Herod removed his army, and came near to Jerusalem, and pitched his camp hard by the city. Now this was the third year since he had been made king at Rome; (466) and as he removed his camp and came near that part of the wall where it could be most easily assaulted, he pitched that camp before the temple, intending to make his attacks in the same manner as did Pompey. So he encompassed the place with three bulwarks, and erected towers, and employed a great many hands about the work, and cut down the trees that were round about the city; (467) and when he had appointed proper persons to oversee the works, even while the army lay before the city, he went to Samaria, to complete his marriage, and to take to wife the daughter of Alexander, the son of Aristobulus; for he had betrothed her already, as I have before related. **Chapter 16** How Herod, When He Had Married Mariamne, Took Jerusalem with the Assistance of Sossius, by Force; And How the Government of the Asamoneans Was Put an End to **1.** (468) After the wedding was over, came Sossius through Phoenicia, having sent out his army before him over the midland parts. He also, who was their commander, came himself, with a great number of horsemen and footmen. The king also came himself from Samaria, and brought with him no small army, besides that which was there before, for they were about thirty thousand; (469), and they all met together at the walls of Jerusalem, and encamped at the north wall of the city, being now an army of eleven legions, armed men on foot, and six thousand horsemen, with other auxiliaries out of Syria." (Josephus, Antiquities 14.465–469)

1. A modern Chuppah has many meanings that all have their origin in ancient Jewish wedding custom of the virginity cloth.

[](http://www.bible.ca/marriage/bible-ancient-jewish-marriage-chuppah-proof-of-virginity-cloth-canopy-bed-modern-jewish-wedding-ceremony.jpg)

* 1. The Chuppah has undergone a gradual evolution of meaning. It began as the "virginity cloth" that lay under the bride when she consummated the marriage. Then the cloth changes its position from under the bride on the bed, to over the bride on the bed as a canopy. Then it came to symbolize the room metaphorically and finally the sheet was moved from over the couple's bed in a private bedroom, out in public as a four-posted canopy over the bridal couple at the modern wedding ceremony. So the sheet began under the bride, then over the bride in private, then over the bridal couple in public.
  2. Originally, the chuppah may have been the "proof of virginity" bedsheet that the couple placed under the bride when they first copulate.
  3. The chuppah is a four-posted canopy under which the couple is married in modern Jewish synagogues.
  4. The chuppah was the "Bridal Suite" where the couple first has sex, similar to the special rooms hotels provide couples on their wedding night.
  5. The chuppah is a literal canopy sheet over the four-bed posts of the bed on which the marriage is consummated
  6. The chuppah is also known as a Huppah, baldachin or baldaquin.

1. The event of consummation was as complex as it was important:
   1. When the groom satisfied the father of the bride that he had to fulfill the financial and legal requirements of the ketubah, he would set a date for the chuppah and notify the bride.
   2. The chuppah (wedding room with the bed) would be prepared for the couple.
   3. The bride and the groom might have up to ten friends who would act as witnesses to the event.
   4. The mother of the bride and/or the bride herself, would sew the name of the couple and possibly the date of the chuppah onto a cloth about 2 feet square. This was called the "proof of virginity cloth" that the bride would bleed onto, as she lay on top of it during copulation.
   5. Both the groom's parents and the parents of the bride would assign several formal witnesses to the event and would wait outside or in an adjoining room while the couple consummated the marriage in the wedding bed. “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands [outside the chuppah room] and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.” (John 3:29)
   6. The groom would hand the "proof of virginity cloth" cloth to the witnesses in the room outside, and the cloth would be witnessed and kept by the father of the bride as proof of her virginity.
2. The parable of the ten virgins illustrates the tradition of the chuppah:

a.         The brides "ten virgins" served as witnesses and would walk with the bride in a ceremony to the wedding feast in the house of the groom.

b.         As the bride was waiting for the groom to arrive in the chuppah and join her on the consummation bed, the ten fell asleep due to the unexpected delay of the groom.

c.         Once the groom arrived, the ten male witnesses of the groom would announce his arrival with a shofar and calls from his own voice to the bride and her maidens.

**[](http://www.bible.ca/marriage/bible-ancient-jewish-marriage-voice-call-groom-shofar.jpg)**

d.         At this point, they trimmed their lamps, which had been burning, and the wise virgins had extra oil needed because of the delay.

e.         As the groom takes the bride to the chuppah room, a celebration party begins in the outside room, and the 5 foolish virgins run to buy extra oil.

f.          The proof of virginity cloth is handed to the witnesses, and the bride's parents for safekeeping and the entire wedding party make their way to the groom's house, and the door is closed when the last person in the procession enters.

g.         The 5 foolish virgins arrive and knock on the closed door and are told "I never knew you" and are forbidden to enter the wedding feast.

h.         "Jesus says that this kingdom will be like ten girls with torches who were going out to meet the bridegroom. This makes clear that Jesus is speaking of a wedding. Not much is known of the actual wedding ceremony in first-century Palestine. It was preceded by a betrothal that was much more binding than is an engagement in modern societies. It was really the first stage of marriage, and it took divorce proceedings to dissolve it. At the end of the betrothal period, the marriage took place, on a Wednesday if the bride was a virgin and on a Thursday if she was a widow.

The bridegroom and his party made their way to the home of the bride, or to some other place; there is a record of a wedding in which two parties, one of the bridegroom and his friends and the other of the bride and her people, went out to meet each other at an unspecified place (1 Macc. 9:37–39). When the two groups came together, the wedding took place. After this, there was a procession, generally to the home of the bridegroom, where feasting took place that might go on for days. The processions often took place at night, when torches made for a spectacular display. Clearly, this is presupposed in Jesus’ parable. The ten girls were involved in going out to meet the bridegroom, which makes it appear that they belonged to the bride’s party. They would then have had their place in the procession to the bridegroom’s home for the feast." (Pillar New Testament Commentary, Matt. 25:1)

i.                 “But after these things they brought word to Jonathan and Simon his brother, that the children of Ambri were making a great marriage, and were bringing the bride from Nadabath with a great train, a daughter of one of the great nobles of Canaan. And they remembered John, their brother, and went up, and hid themselves under the covert of the mountain; and they lifted up their eyes, and saw, and behold, a great ado and much baggage; and the bridegroom came forth, and his friends and his brethren to meet them (i.e., those forming the bridal procession) with timbrels, and minstrels, and many weapons.” (1 Maccabees 9:37–39)

**III. The proof of virginity cloth:**

***Would you pass the "test of virginity" on your wedding night or be stoned in the morning?***

*Hey Brides! Imagine having the best man and nine of his friends and your maid of honor and 9 of your best friends, sitting in the hall of your hotel room on your wedding night, waiting to hear your new husband yell for joy when he discovers you are a virgin! After consummation, he takes the bloodied bed sheet and gives it to the witnesses chosen by the father of the bride. This bed sheet is kept in a secure area to be used as proof if your new husband ever accuses you of not being a virgin on your wedding night. Creepy? Today's young women have no idea how highly past cultures and God values virginity! If she did not bleed, the groom could report this to the father of the bride, and she would be stoned to death. Next time you are in the back seat of a 54 Chevy at the drive-in theatre, think twice before you lift your skirt! It may cost you your life!*

1. In North America, 75% of unmarried people under 20 have had sex (fornication), and 1 in 4 of these will get an STD (venereal disease).
   1. In Israel, 99% of girls were virgins.
   2. Tamar never married because of her rape but lived in Absalom's house because she was not a virgin.
2. The bride price was usually set at 50 shekels of silver, making a false claim about your wife's virginity was a 100 shekel fine.
3. If the wife got pregnant before the chuppah (formal stage two consummation ceremony) it was no big deal, and the child was not considered a bastard. However, this left the bride vulnerable to future accusations of not being a virgin, since she would have no "virginity cloth." (This was the case of Mary when she told Joseph she was pregnant.)
4. "*Proof of virginity*. A blood-stained cloth or chemise was exhibited as a proof of the bride’s virginity (Deut. 22:13–21). This custom continues in some places in the Near East. (New Bible Dictionary, Marriage)
5. The Biblical law of proof of virginity cloth:
   1. “If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then turns against her, and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, ‘I took this woman, but when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin,’ then the girl’s father and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of the girl’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. “The girl’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man for a wife, but he turned against her; and behold, he has charged her with shameful deeds, saying, “I did not find your daughter a virgin.” But this is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity.’ And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city. “So the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him, and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give it to the girl’s father because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days. “But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin, then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father’s house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you.” (Deuteronomy 22:13–21)
   2. This passage is quoted in the Dead Sea Scrolls which adds the comment about the "virginity cloth": "When a man takes a wife, has sexual intercourse with her and takes a dislike to her, and brings a baseless charge against her, ruining her reputation, and says, ‘I have taken this woman, approached her, and did not find the proof of virginity in her’, the father or the mother of the girl shall take the girl’s proof of virginity and bring it to the elders at the gate. The girl’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to be this man’s wife; he has taken a dislike to her and has brought a baseless charge against her saying, “I have not found the proof of virginity in your daughter.” Here is the proof of my daughter’s virginity.’ ***They shall spread out the garment before the elders of that city***. The elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him. They shall fine him one hundred pieces of silver which they shall give to the father of the girl because he (the husband) has tried to ruin the reputation of an Israelite virgin." (Dead Sea Scrolls: The Temple Scroll, 11QT = 11Q19)
   3. "These two paragraphs deal with a man who, following his wedding, spreads the charge that he found his wife not to have been a virgin. He probably does so in order to get out of the marriage—should he simply divorce her without cause, he would probably forfeit the bride-price—or perhaps to get the bride-price reduced to that of a nonvirgin (on the bride-price, see Comment to 20:7). ***The bride’s parents produce physical evidence of her virginity, namely, a sheet or garment that was spotted with blood when the marriage was consummated***. Upon this evidence, the slandering husband is flogged, fined, and prohibited from ever divorcing the bride." (The JPS Torah Commentary, Accusations of Premarital Unchastity Deuteronomy 22:13-21, 1996 AD)
   4. "At the time of the second temple, a virgin bride was considered to be worth 50 shekels, and a widow or divorced woman about half that sum. During this period, a virgin bride was normally married in midweek so that, if her husband found her not to be a virgin, he could bring proof to the court the following day, which would still be in advance of the Sabbath. … Symbolic ceremonies may sometimes have been included as part of the betrothal or wedding ceremonies, such as Ruth’s request that Boaz spread his skirt over her to indicate that he was taking her to wife (Ru 3:9). Another ritual may have been the ceremonial removal of the bride’s girdle by the groom in the nuptial chamber, which was a room or tent specially prepared for the newly married couple. The marriage was normally consummated on the first night (Gen. 29:23; Tb 8:1), and ***the stained linen would be retained as evidence of the bride’s virginity***." (Tyndale Bible dictionary, Marriage customs)
6. “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.” (John 3:29)
   1. "To clarify for his disciples what he meant, therefore, the Baptizer used a typical Jewish type of parable, drawn from Jewish marriage customs. At that time ***the bridegroom normally selected one or two close friends to escort the bride to the bridegroom’s marriage chamber and to wait outside the room or tent for the bridegroom’s shout and often for receipt of tokens that the marriage had been consummated with his virgin bride***. Such friends of the bridegroom were thus able to certify to the wedding guests that the consummation of the marriage had taken place and the joyous festivities could continue (cf. 3:29). John gladly accepted his role as a friend of the bridegroom. Just as he had earlier willingly turned over his disciples to Jesus in a self-giving act (1:35–37), here he expressed his genuine joy that Jesus was being accepted by the people. This brief parable, therefore, serves as a powerful illustration." (New American Commentary, John 3:29)

**IV. Stage three: the wedding feast: John 2:1-11**

“*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding*.” (John 2:1–2)

1.                      The wedding feast happened in the home of the groom or in a family member of the groom, like the parents of the groom as seen in the parable of the wedding feast.

2.                      Matthew 22:1-14 has a king throwing a feast for his son:

a.      “Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. “And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. “Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.” ’ “But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. “But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. “Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ‘Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.’ “Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. “But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And the man was speechless. “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ “For many are called, but few are chosen.”” (Matthew 22:1–14)

3.                      Jn 2:1-11 illustrates a wedding feast in Cana:

a.      “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” (John 2:1–11)

**V. Mary and Joseph:** “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed [ketubah] to Joseph before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to divorce her away secretly.” (Matthew 1:18–19)

1. **See also:** The true Bible story of the birth of Jesus: separating myth from fact about Christmas.
2. Joseph and the father of Mary had signed a ketubah and were 100 % married:
   1. The Holy Spirit calls Joseph "her husband" before they had "come together" (she was a virgin)
   2. Joseph was going to divorce her.
3. Mary was in a vulnerable position at the mercy of her husband: She was pregnant before the chuppah (formal stage two consummation ceremony) and had no "virginity cloth."
   1. “Mary said to the angel, “How can this be since I am a virgin?” The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for that reason, the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:34–35)
4. Joseph was a "righteous man":
   1. He did not want to disgrace her even though he believed she was an adulterer.
   2. He was going to divorce her secretly by merely handing her the "get" (divorce paper) without making an accusation of adultery.
   3. This meant that Joseph was required to return the inventory of assets the bride had brought into the marriage and pay the "bride price" to her father.
   4. He was righteous because he had grounds to accuse her, "get even with her" as is the motive in many divorces, keep her inventory of assets and not have to pay the 50 shekel bride price.
   5. Joseph had everything to gain by openly accusing her, and it cost him much to divorce her secretly.
   6. How many divorcing spouses would give up a solid, winnable legal position in court and adopt the losing position, merely to protect the reputation of their spouse at great personal financial disaster?

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| **Joseph had two choices:** | | | |
| **Choice** | **Whose reputation was harmed?** | **Who got the bride's dowry** | **Joseph pays 50 shekel fine?** |
| Choice 1: divorce Mary for cause | Mary's reputation harmed | Joseph kept the dowry for himself | Joseph doesn't have to pay. |
| Choice 2: divorce Mary for no cause secretly | Joseph's reputation harmed | Joseph gave the dowry back to Mary | Joseph must pay 50 shekels. |
| **Would you make the same choice Joseph did?** | | | |

**VI. The Song of Solomon:**

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| ***Bride to the Groom:***  My companions [like the ten virgins of Mt 15] are listening for your voice, Let me hear it!” Sos 8:12-14 | **<http://www.bible.ca/marriage/bible-ancient-jewish-marriage-voice-call-groom-shofar.jpg>** |

*“My [Shulammite woman] very own vineyard [body] is at my disposal; The thousand shekels [money] are for you, Solomon, And two hundred are for those who take care of its fruit.” [she chooses the shepherd boy and he signs a ketubbah with her father] “O you [she says to the shepherd boy] who sit in the gardens, My companions [like the ten virgins of Matt. 15] are listening for your voice— Let me hear it!” “, Hurry, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young stag On the mountains of spices.””* (Song of Solomon 8:12–14)

1. In the Song of Solomon, the beautiful Shulammite woman ponders if she should marry Solomon for money and fame or the shepherd boy she grew up with for true love. In the end, she chooses the shepherd boy.
2. Notice that she, not her father, made the choice of who she was going to marry. In fact, the Shulammite's parents are never actively present in the story.
   1. This illustrates that a good father will take his daughters advice and feelings into account when making a decision, just like a good husband will take his wife's advice and feelings into account before making a decision.
   2. It seems her father allowed his daughter the freedom to choose her husband and then sign the ketubbah with the man of her choice.
   3. The consent of the bride is also seen in Rebekah: Rebekah consented: “And they said, “We will call the girl and consult her wishes.” Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.”” (Genesis 24:57–58)
3. The figure of the bride waiting with her companions for the voice of the groom when he arrives at her house to consummate the marriage (stage 2) is exactly parallel to the parable of the ten virgins of Matthew 25:1.

**VII. Ancient Jewish divorce from Moses to Christ:**

1.                  When the husband divorced his wife for any reason, he gave her a legal document called a "Get."

a.      If she was guilty of adultery, he kept her inventory of assets she brought in the marriage and did not have to pay the "Bride Price" to her father.

b.      If the husband divorced his wife for no reason or "cause," or took a second wife without permission, he must return the bride's entire inventory of assets to her and pay the set "Bride Price" cash to the father of the bride.

4.                   The "Bride Price" was a large sum of money defined in the Ketubbah that the groom had to pay the father of the bride if:

a.       He divorced her for no cause.

b.      He was guilty of adultery.

c.       He takes on a second wife.

5.                   The husband was not permitted to give his wife the "Get" until he had satisfied all the requirements of the Ketubbah by returning the bride's inventory of assets she brought into the marriage and paid the "Bride Price" to her father.

**VIII. The church is the virgin bride of Christ: Our three-stage marriage to Christ!**

1. The imagery of all these ancient marriage customs is the foundation of our salvation in Christ. Only when you understand the wedding customs of the Bible can you begin to appreciate the rich imagery of our salvation in Christ and our marriage to Christ *as his virgin bride*.
2. Christ supplies His saving blood as a substitute for our own virgin blood that we lack (because we were spiritual harlots) on our wedding night. Before we were saved, we were worthless "harlots" who had lost our virginity. A woman found not to be a virgin on her wedding night was put to death. The blood of Christ makes us into spiritual virgins on our consummation night (second coming) and keeps us from being stoned. Christ allows us to experience a kind of "virginity recaptured" through his blood.
3. There are three stages to our marriage to Christ, exactly like a real marriage.
4. **STAGE 1:** The legal contract of when we became Christians by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism by immersion into the Body of Christ. At this moment of water baptism, we are born again and married (betrothed) to Christ. This contract binds each to what they agreed to do: Christians must be obedient to Christ, and he will save us!
   1. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners **[spiritual harlots who have lost their virginity]**, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood **[stage 1: initial salvation]**, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:8–10)
   2. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:25–27)
5. **STAGE 2:** The consummation is the second coming when we, the bride wait to hear the shout of Jesus and his companions. At this time, the faithful will be found to be "pure virgins."
   1. "For I (Paul) am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed **[stage 1: married when born again]** you to one husband so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin **[stage 2: second coming]**.” (2 Corinthians 11:2)
   2. “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28–29)
6. **STAGE 3:** The Wedding Feast
   1. “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ ” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” (Revelation 19:7–9)

**Conclusion:**

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| **The three C's Marriage in the Bible:** | | |
|  | **Bible Marriage Culture** | **The Church is the Bride of Christ** |
| **Contract**  (Stage 1) | Genesis 34:12 bride price and dowry gift  1 Cor. 7:38 the father controlled the marriage of the daughter, even though she would tell him who she wanted to marry.  Rebekah: Gen. 24:33; 51-53; 57-58  Leah: Gen. 29:15-19  Rachel: Gen 29:27 | **Initial salvation**  We come into contract and covenant with Christ when are saved.  Mk 16:16 believe and be baptized to be saved  Romans 5:8-10 While we were worthless sinners the blood of Christ made us pure virgins.  Ephesians 5:25–27 Christ offered a dowry for the bride in that He died for her and shed his blood. |
| **Consummation**  (stage 2) | Mt 25:1- parable of ten virgins  John 3:29 voice of bridegroom outside consummation bedroom  Rebekah: Gen 24:64-67  Leah: Gen 29:21-26  Rachel: Gen 29:30 | **Second Coming**  Jesus returns for his virgin bride after preparing a place for us to live together in heaven.  2 Corinthians 11:2 the virgin blood we lack is supplied by the blood of Christ. Our proof of virginity is the blood of Christ.  John 3:29 Joyful voice of Christ at second coming  John 5:28-29 voice of Jesus |
| **Celebration**  (Stage 3) | John 2:1-11 Wedding feast at Cana  Matt. 22:1-14 Parable of the wedding feast  Leah and Rachel: Gen 29:27-28 | **Heaven**  Revelation 19:7-9 wedding feast in Heaven. |

1. What we see in the Bible is the Jewish custom of ARRANGED MARRIAGES. Today, we combine all three customs into one day:
   1. Contract is the signing of the marriage license
   2. Wedding feast is the reception
   3. Consummation happens in the bridal suite that night in the hotel.

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| **Bible marriage vs. modern marriage** | | |
|  | **Bible Marriage** | **Modern Marriage** |
| **Women choose groom** | She goes to her father and asks him to arrange the marriage. Notice Rebekah accepted bracelets and a nose ring, give consent to marriage. The Shulammite in SOS chose her husband. | No marriage unless the woman says yes and accepts a ring.  Weeks or years later the groom prepares for the bride. |
| **Contract**  (Stage 1) | Groom or agent of groom signs a contract with the father of the bride. | The bride and groom sign the marriage license at the wedding ceremony. |
| **Consummation**  (stage 2) | Weeks or years later when the groom has met the conditions of the contract the father of the bride consents to consummation. | Happens in the honeymoon suite of the hotel after the reception. |
| **Celebration**  (Stage 3) | Days or weeks | Reception after signing of the marriage contract at the ceremony. |

1. There was no "wedding ceremony" in the synagogue in the first century, performed under a canopy where the bride and groom would hold hands and say, "I do" before an audience of friends and family. This didn’t develop for hundreds of years after Jesus died on the cross as the Passover lamb for the sins of mankind.
2. Marriages in the Bible had three steps:
   1. Legal marriage by signing a written contract (ketubbah) between the father of the bride and the groom. (Once signed, the couple were as married as they will ever be even if they never complete the next two stages. It required a formal legal divorce called a "get" to loose both parties from the marriage bond.)
   2. Optional step 2: Consummation of the marriage (chuppah) at the bride's home with a "virginity cloth" up to 7 years or more after the contract was signed.
   3. Optional step 3: Wedding feast at the groom's home.
3. Christians are the church, the virgin bride of Christ. Christ used his blood to make pure virgins (Christians) out of spiritual harlots (non-Christians).
4. No matter how sinful we have been in the past, Christ has chosen us, cleansed us and married us by ketubbah contract:
   1. There are conditions we must meet in order fulfill the ketubbah legal contract we signed when we became Christians through faith and water Baptism (Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38; Act 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)
   2. We must remain faithful until death in obedience to Christ!
5. How incredibly beautiful are Paul's words to the notoriously immoral Corinthian church? The city of Corinth had such a bad reputation of NOT being a virgin, that when a young girl started to sleep around with men and live a wild life of immoral drunkenness, they would say, "She has Corinthisized." There was likely a very high percentage of the Christian women at who attended weekly with the church at Corinth, were not virgins on their wedding day yet Paul calls them "pure virgins":
   1. "For I (Paul) am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.” (2 Cor. 11:2)
   2. “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)
6. The blessings of Salvation are unspeakable in that all our sins are washed away, and we now stand before Christ as spiritual virgins, waiting the day he arrives to take us as his wife forever!
7. Just as the Shulammite and Rebekah consented to the arranged marriages, so too Christians much chose Jesus as their groom.
   1. Shulammite chose, not her parents: Song of Solomon 8:12–14)
   2. Rebekah consented: “And they said, “We will call the girl and consult her wishes.” Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.”” (Genesis 24:57–58)
8. The three "C" of bible weddings:
   1. **C**ontract
   2. **C**onsummation
   3. **C**elebration

By Steve Rudd: Contact the author for comments, input or corrections.

http://www.bible.ca/marriage/ancient-jewish-three-stage-weddings-and-marriage-customs-ceremony-in-the-bible.htm